

Tackling Low Back Pain



Low back problems affect virtually everyone at one time or another in their lives. Fifty percent of working adults are believed to have symptoms of low back pain at any given time. Low back pain can result from strain and stress to the back's discs, muscles, and ligaments.

Many people with low back pain may experience major lifestyle changes that affect both their physical and mental lives. To continue participating in regular work and leisure activities, people with low back pain may have to make changes in their daily lives. Occupational therapists are trained in recognizing both psychological and physical issues that may influence the treatment of back pain. By looking at all factors that could contribute to low back pain, occupational therapists can provide the tools to help people accomplish their daily tasks at work and at leisure activities.

What can an occupational therapist do?

- **Identify** work and leisure activities that a person with low back pain is having trouble doing.
- **Evaluate** physical factors, such as muscle strength, endurance, range of motion, and posture.
- **Evaluate** psychological factors, such as self-esteem, coping skills, time management, and self-control, and facilitate the implementation of ways to cope with stress, manage time, and build self-confidence.
- **Conduct** a job site analysis to determine how the person's work environment may contribute to low back pain.
- **Collaborate** with the client and his or her family and caregivers to establish a treatment plan and the goals of the plan. The therapist will aid the client in determining the most effective way to complete activities, such as bathing and grooming, maintaining good health, managing a household, and implementing safety procedures at work to prevent pain and further injury.

- **Recommend** equipment, when necessary, such as using a dolly or cart to move materials at work.

What can a person with low back pain do?

- **Participate** in a work-hardening or work-conditioning program so that he or she can return to work.
- **Seek** ongoing treatment for low back pain at outpatient settings, such as private practice clinics, pain management clinics, and industrial rehabilitation centers.
- **Implement** at home and at work those exercises and advice offered by an occupational therapist, such as how to sit and stand properly, and how to participate in a specific task or activity so as to prevent injury and pain.
- **Share** treatment goals with family, friends, and caregivers who can be helpful in regaining strength and ability.

Need more information?

Low back pain is a serious problem that can cause not only physical pain, but psychological issues as well. Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants are trained in helping both adults and children with a broad range of physical, developmental, and behavioral conditions. Practitioners also help clients in

wellness techniques that may prevent injury and disease. If you would like to consult an occupational therapist, practitioners are available through most hospitals, medical centers, and clinics. Contact your local health officials for more information.

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